

KANSAS

Kansas State Historical Society
Cultural Resources Division

KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

CERTIFICATION OF STATE REGISTER LISTING

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: Thayer State Bank

Address: 201 Neosho Avenue, Thayer, KS 66776

Legal:

County: Neosho

Owner: City of Thayer

Address: P.O. Box 157, Thayer, KS 66776

National Register eligible _____

State Register eligible X

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on November 8, 2003.

I hereby certify that this property is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Richard D. Pankratz 11-17-03
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

9/95

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Thayer State Bank (c. 1900) is located at 201 Neosho Avenue in Thayer, Neosho County, Kansas. The one-story brick building maintains an eastern and northern facade orientation; its double door entry faces to the northeast while its windows face to the east and north. The west and south elevations have no windows as they were formerly adjoined by another building. Built at an intersection, the northeastern corner of the building stands at a forty-five degree angle to the street. Overall dimensions for the building are twenty-four feet from east to west and forty feet from north to south. Two corbelled, parapet walls capped with sandstone hide a single slope, slightly pitched roof. A sandstone foundation supports the brick building.

On June 29, 1900, the Thayer Independent News reported that "The brick layers began work on the Thayer State Bank building Wednesday, Mr Fretwell the stone mason having just finished the foundation." Their brickwork exhibits an elegant restraint. Pilasters rise on either side of the corner entrance. These pilasters are comprised of brick set to create a gentle outward angle. Round bricks rise on either side of this column of angled brick. At the transom level, these pilasters are accented with rectangular blocks of stone etched with a diamond pattern. The pilasters extend the height of the building. The corner entrance's facade is further accented by an arch of raised brick over the top of the transom. Further up the facade, five corbels support a stringcourse of dog-tooth brick. A large stone bearing the bank's name (Thayer State Bank) and date of construction (1900) is inset above these stringcourses. An arched roof parapet extends above the name and date stone. The entrance door surround has been covered with a storm door and a window air conditioner. The original doors remain but have been cut down in height.

The north facade is dominated by two sets of paired windows set into recessed panels, while the east facade features four panels. The northern-most panel on the eastern facade contains one set of paired windows; the southern-most panel contains a window and a door. The transom windows that were once visible above these sets of paired windows and the window-door pair are currently covered with wood. Arches of raised brick span the distance between the pilasters that rise between the pairs of windows and on the building's corners.

The east facade's two center panels are windowless, recessed panels of brick that rise between the pilasters to the cornice. Courses of dog-tooth brick extend across these panels between the transom-height blocks of etched stone.

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On the north and east facades, four rows of corbelled stringcourses span the distance between the tops of the pilasters that divide the window pairs and define the corners of the building. Header-width corbels are inset into the pilasters near their tops. At the cornice line, seventeen corbels support a stringcourse of dog-tooth brick. Beneath the blocks of diamond-patterned etched stone that interrupt the pilasters at the transom height, the smooth-faced pilasters are edged in rounded brick. A course of stone extends around the north, east, and corner entrance facades at the window sill level. Decorative moldings accent the windows' lintels and mullions; the panels that are set between the tops of the transom windows and the brick arches are likewise elaborated with decorative woodwork.

The west and south facades are brick partially covered by plaster. The top quarter of these elevations are metal. The south facade features a door topped by a tall arched transom near the southeast corner of the building.

When construction of the building originally started it was to be built as a free-standing structure. June 1900, a fire totally destroyed two of the finest buildings in Thayer, this left two businesses needing a place to relocate. "Trenches are being dug for a new brick building adjoining the State Bank building on the west and south." (Thayer Independent News, 7/13/00) May 2002, the adjoining building was torn down, one single roof covered both buildings. There were no fire walls extending to the roof on the west and south sides. This left a void on those two sides, which is now covered with white tin. The exposed brick on the west and south sides are an exterior brick not the soft orange brick usually used for interior common walls, this further supports that the bank was to be a free standing structure.

Partition walls and the ceiling, which was dropped in 1949 from fifteen feet to nine feet, have changed the interior's appearance. The walls are plaster with wood paneling covering a portion of them. An embossed tin ceiling, cornice and a walk-in safe remain intact from the 1900 period. The original milled woodwork remains mostly intact, although painted. The original bank counter has been removed. "The Thayer State Bank purchased their counter of the DeWolf Factory at Garnett. It is an elegant antique oak." (Thayer Independent News, 6/8/00) The partition walls divide the rear quarter of the building into a storage room and restroom.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thayer State Bank (c. 1900) is being nominated to the Kansas Register of Historic Places for its service to the community of Thayer, Kansas. The Thayer State Bank served the community from 1900 thru 1932. After that period the building housed a number of different entities, including the post office, a restaurant and a doctor's office. Today the building is being used as the Thayer Museum.

Like most communities in southeast Kansas, the history of Thayer in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is tied to the resources it found hidden underground. In Neosho county, that wealth came in the forms of oil and gas, discovered in the mid-1890s. This discovery brought a flush of temporary prosperity to Thayer. In 1900, two well known Neosho county businessmen, L.W. Stillwell and J.H. Sperry, concluded to start a bank in Thayer. May 1900 editions of the Thayer Independent News describe the establishment of the bank:

The State Bank Commissioner was here Wednesday and attended to the business required of him in the starting of the Thayer State Bank. They will start temporarily in Stowells Racket Store and will proceed at once to erect a neat bank building on the old Baldwin House corner." (Thayer Independent News, 5/25/00). The bank officers were J.H. Sperry, President, Geo. Gelwix, Vice President and L.W. Stillwell, Cashier.

The bank directors wasted little time in getting the new bank building construction started. "John Eaton is making plans for the Thayer State Bank building. It will be a handsome building of brick one story high." "The Thayer State Bank has unloaded two cars of brick for their new building this week." (Thayer Independent News, 5/25/00).

The Thayer State Bank served the surrounding community for some thirty years. "The Thayer State Bank opened in May 1900, its chief promoter being L.W. Stillwell, formerly of the St. Paul State Bank. The capital stock was \$6500. J.H. Sperry was president and Mr. Stillwell was Cashier. In January 1904, Mr. Stillwell retired and the bank was reorganized with a capital of \$10,000. D.A. Bollinger became cashier in March 1904, and served until April 1913, when his interest was sold to C.R. Hoyt. In November 1926, this bank closed but was reorganized a month later. It closed again April 1932, but, after some delays, its depositors were paid in full. H.G. Lowrance was its President, C.R. Hoyt, active Vice President; A.E. Neill, cashier." (Graves, 788). Although the Thayer State Bank had been the only bank in town when it opened, at the time of the bank's closure, the town had two banks—one too many for the small community to support through the economic downturn of the 1930s.

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Although the Thayer community has continued to identify the building as the Thayer State Bank, the bank building has served the town in a variety of other capacities since its Depression-era closure. Until the building was purchased by Acel Price in December 1936, A.E. Neill's insurance company operated there. In the spring of 1937, Mr. Price performed some minor repairs and gave the building's interior fresh coats of paint and wallpaper. On August 5, 1937, an ad in the Thayer News announced that Acel Price and his wife had opened the A&M Cafe, which served "regular meals, plate lunch[es], pastries, candy, cigarettes, cigars, beer and pop."

In late July 1938, Dr. R. Herbert Rollow, a physician, announced that he had opened his office in the Thayer Bank Building and would be holding office hours twice a week. Dr. Rollow moved his office to another location in Thayer in June 1939, when Acel Price leased the building to be used as Thayer's Post Office. The building served the Thayer community as the post office for several years. Norma Bowers purchased the building from Acel Price in 1966. In 1967, she sold the Thayer State Bank building to Harry Rash, whose estate donated the structure to the City of Thayer for use as a community museum in 1997.

The building illustrates the one-part commercial block written about by Richard Longstreth in his book The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture. The one-part commercial block has a simple box design with two decorated facades. "Victorian one-part commercial blocks were also designed for banks. In general, these buildings are of masonry construction. They tend to be somewhat tall and more embellished than their retail counter parts." This type of building usually had a small investment price for what income it could generate for the services provided. A September 1900 edition of the Thayer Independent News has an official statement of the bank's business and it shows spending \$1405.34 for the bank building.

The one-story brick building is the only commercial building of this vintage remaining in the city of Thayer. The north and east facades are quite ornate with brick and sandstone details. All doors and windows have fanlights above them. The main entry, like many other nineteenth century banks, was built at a forty-five degree angle to the streets. High above the front entry is a name (Thayer State Bank) and date (1900) stone.

The north and east walls are capped with sandstone, and an arching cap rises directly above the name-date stone. The south and west walls were previously used as common walls for an adjoining building; this adjoining building was torn down in May of 2002. The original bank safe remains intact the safe door has been painted white. The pine flooring remains and shows wear from foot traffic and the outlines indicating where the bank counter might have stood. The original tin ceiling and the cornice remain mostly

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intact, covered by a five-foot dropped ceiling. The double door entry maintains the original doors although the height of them has been altered. The interior woodwork around the doors, windows and floor have been painted white, hiding the original pine lacquer finish. This building stands as a window to the past history of Thayer, a reminder of the dreams of prosperity which the discovery of gas and oil had brought to the community.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

DeMoss, J.A. Information about Thayer, Kansas. (Thayer, Kansas: 1903.)

Graves, W.W. History of Neosho County Vol. II. (St. Paul, Kansas: Journal Press, 1951).

Longstreth, Richard. The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture. (Washington: Preservation Press, 1987).

Register of Deeds.

Thayer Independent News; 29 June 1900, 13 July 1900, 8 June 1900, 25 May 1900, 8 June 1900.

Thayer News; 8 April 1935, 31 December 1936, 17 June 1937, 22 July 1937, 5 August 1937, 28 July 1938, 22 June 1939, 29 June 1939, 13 October 1949.

Thayer Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1905.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

North 40 feet of Lot 001, Block 29, Thayer Original Town. Bounded on the East by Preston Street, to the North by Neosho Avenue, to the South and West by adjacent property lines.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the entire parcel that is historically associated with the property.